

# Michal Jones

## IN THE WAKE OF A TRANSFER

*for Nia Wilson*

I.

MacArthur was not supposed  
to be where your  
line ended –

*Nia's gone*

You were to return home,  
ride ricketing rails deep East,  
transfer your long way Home –

*A liquified, river of blood*

Graduate with honors, make  
beats bend corners hold hands,  
be eighteen –  
*brightness*

*In supernova*

You swallowed ancestral  
fear to step onto that platform,  
your sisters kept closeby –

*Cleft carotid rests under tarp*

A scream like  
that ceaseless, sparking grate  
will spear a humid night –

*9-car Dublin/Pleasanton in 2 minutes*

And where do you journey now?  
And what sense do we make of this?  
Where will your mother's body breathe?

*She illuminates the tunnels*

II.

In the morning, when Her train comes, my Nails punch lunes into my palms. In the morning,  
Black women gather beneath unseen umbrellas – scatter plots along gray platform – lined  
against the walls. In the morning, Black women downcast. Avert their gazes from oblivion, necks  
weighted with recall. I boomerang a rage white. Slice a crescent sharp enough to sever. Tongues  
that utter this:           *senseless. Senseless.*

*Senseless.*

when children  
become ancestors.

III.

& Mama –

I promise I'm safe on trains here.

& Mama –

I can hear you cry-singing for me.

& Mama –

You gonna find your way back to breathing.

& Mama –

There's so many colors here.

Mama –

Colors I don't even have proper names for.

& Mama –

We got them dancers out here, too!

& Mama –

Everyone, everything is conductor.

& Mama –

Our trains don't have tracks, just kinda glide like water.

& Mama –

It's warm here, warm like light.

& Mama –

I'm alright, mama. I'm more than alright.



MJ is a poet & parent living in Oakland, CA. Their work is featured or forthcoming at *Kissing Dynamite*, *Rigorous Mag*, & *Borderlands Texas Poetry Review*. They are an Assistant Poetry Editor at *Foglifter Press*. MJ has received fellowships from the Hurston/Wright Foundation, SF Writers Grotto, VONA, & Kearny Street Workshop. They are currently the Community Engagement Graduate Fellow in the MFA program at

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